

PS 210 INTRODUCTION TO EMPIRICAL METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
WINTER 2024

Instructor: Prof. Saera Lee
Class Time: MW 9:30 – 10:50am
Classroom: 122 University Hall
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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00pm, or by appointment.
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Section: 61, Wed 2-2:50 pm University Library 4722	Section: 63, Wed 3-3:50pm University Library 3722	Section: 60, Fri 10-10:50am Locy Hall 301	Section: 62, Fri 10-10:50am Locy Hall 111
Office Hours: Wed 11am-12pm, Scott Hall 111	Office Hours: Mon 11am-12pm, Scott Hall 110	Office Hours: Wed 3- 5pm, Scott Hall 214	Office Hours: Wed 12-1pm, Scott Hall 213

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course introduces the empirical methods political scientists use to answer questions about politics, and the reasons why such methods matter. We begin by considering how we use data and information in social science in general and political science in particular. We then examine three basic strategies for overcoming the obstacles to reliable knowledge about the political world: experimentation, quantitative studies (statistics) and smaller case studies with a qualitative emphasis. This course will prepare you to take a more in-depth look into these methods in subsequent coursework.

By the end of the class, you will be able to

- Identify and explain descriptive and causal inference approaches, as well as their challenges in political science;
- Critically evaluate inferential claims in academic social science research;
- Identify types of research designs, explain their strengths and weaknesses, and discuss alternative approaches; and
- Apply these tools to critically evaluate examples of political science research.

REQUIRED READINGS

The textbook we are going to use is Empirical Methods in Political Science: An Introduction (EMPS) by Professor Jean Clipperton, et al. It is free and available here: <https://nulib-oer.github.io/empirical-methods-polisci/>. Any other supplemental readings or resources will be made available on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Week 1 Assignments (4%): Due Jan 12th (Friday), 11:59pm
Weekly Assignments (Quizzes) (35%): Due every Friday 11:59 pm
Section Participation (10%)
Journal Article Summaries & Presentation (16%)
Final Paper (35%)

Week 1 Assignments (4%): Due Jan 12th (Friday), 11:59pm

These assignments are intended to help acclimate you to the elements of the course. They include a syllabus quiz to make sure all the pieces are clear using the 'canvas quiz' setup, so you'll have an idea of what a quiz is like, recording your name in 'NameCoach' so we'll have an idea of how to correctly pronounce your name. (Note: NameCoach is in the left menu for the course page, so you can find it by looking down the options like 'Home', 'Announcements', etc.)

Weekly Assignments (Quizzes, 7 x 5 = 35%): Due every Friday 11:59 pm

Each week you will have a short reading quiz starting from Jan 26th. This is a short (~9 question) quiz that covers the textbook material for the week. There are some definition questions, some medium difficulty questions, and one more difficult question. You are allowed three total attempts at the quiz and will receive your highest score.

Section Attendance (10%)

Attendance in lecture is not required, but discussion section requires attendance. I strongly encourage you to attend lecture and discussion section each week. Your participation will be graded acceptable/unacceptable for each section meeting – you must actively participate (not merely attend) in order to receive credit.

Journal Article Summaries (16%)

At the beginning of every section, two or more students will be responsible for presenting a summary of journal article that relates to the methods we learn. You must choose one article and provide 5-7 minutes presentation. Presentation should include 1) puzzle and background, 2) theory, 3) hypothesis/implications, 4) method and test, and 5) conclusion and 'do I buy it'. These will help familiarize you with research and prepare you for the final paper.

Final Paper (35%):

At the end of the quarter, students will write 10 double-space pages (Times new roman, 1-inch margins) that lay out a research question and design for a question of interest. We won't focus on the literature review and instead it will be more on showcasing when a different method is appropriate and what can come from its application in light of a substantive question. You will

have a short draft of this due before the last day of the class to get you important feedback for the final version and to be sure you're on track for a strong final paper.

- Proposal: Due March 1st (Fri), 11:59 pm
- Final paper: Due March 13th (Wed), 11:59 pm

Course Grading Scale:

A = 93-100; A- = 90-92.9; B+ = 87-89.9; B = 83-86.9; B- = 80-82.9; C+ = 77-79.9; C = 73-76.9; C- = 70-72.9; D = 60-69.9; F < 60.

Course Policies:

Late Policy

Quizzes and final project are subject to a major penalty if they are turned in late and grade will be deducted by 10% of available grade per day. If students have proper reasons for extension, tell me in advance, at least two weeks before the deadline.

Communication

All email communication with the professor and TAs should include a subject line that begins with PS 210 followed by more specific information regarding the purpose of the email. For example, "PS 210: meeting to discuss paper ideas." I check email periodically, and you can expect me to respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours or more over the weekend or holiday. Yet, if the answers to questions are already found in the syllabus, you may not receive an answer to your email. Always consult the syllabus before emailing a question.

Email is a useful way to ask quick questions. Replying to long questions about the readings/lectures, however, is highly inefficient for both you and me. If you want to talk about something you don't understand, come to office hours! While I respond to student emails, I prefer to talk in person.

Electronic Etiquette

Cellphones may not be used during class. If you anticipate an important phone call (e.g. family emergency) put your phone on vibrate and leave the classroom should you need to answer it. Other electronic devices like laptops or tablets are only allowed for classroom purposes. This policy is aimed at providing the best possible learning environment for all students.

Classroom Etiquette

During lectures and discussion sessions, please be respectful of other students' opinions and phrase your contributions in a constructive manner.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html>

Accessibility/Accommodations

Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (e: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Difference enhances both the teaching and learning experiences. The classroom is a space where all students are welcome, regardless of age, dis/ability, ethnicity, gender identity and/or expression, national origin, race, religious non/belief, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious non/belief, and alignment with other identities or contexts. Furthermore, if any student has a particular consideration, including learning and participation style, that affects their ability to meet course expectations, please see me as soon as possible.

I am personally committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive learning environment for each and every student. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with specific needs or concerns, and the sooner the better. Maintaining transparency (and communication in general) with your instructor is not only a good professional skill, but also a good way to develop a more one-on-one relationship. Furthermore, accommodations are far easier and effective to arrange when planned than when rushed. In short, I will make every effort to ensure students' equal access.

Course Recording

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University's Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Course Outline

This is a preliminary schedule, subject to change to meet our learning objectives throughout the quarter. Please check Canvas for updated information and readings.

1/3 Introduction

EMPS Ch. 1

1/8 Research Questions

EMPS Ch. 2

1/10 Theory and Inference

EMPS Ch. 3

1/17, 1/22 Data and Hypothesis Testing

EMPS Ch. 4

1/24, 1/29 Surveys

EMPS Ch. 5

1/31, 2/5 Experiments

EMPS Ch. 7

2/7, 2/12 Large-N

EMPS Ch. 8

2/14, 2/19, Small-n

EMPS Ch. 9

2/21, 2/26 Network Analysis

EMPS Ch. 11

2/28, 3/4 Time-series/Game Theory/Machine Learning

EMPS Ch. 10, 12

3/6 No Lecture, Work on final paper